

Agriculture & the Regional Natural Heritage System

Halton's Vision

The landscape will always consist of:

- a) Settlement Areas with identifiable communities
- b) A Rural Countryside where agriculture is the preferred and predominant activity
- c) A Natural Heritage System that preserves and enhances the biological diversity and ecological function of Halton.

Halton's support for agriculture

A vibrant agricultural sector is essential for our continued well-being and quality of life. To encourage this, the Region:

- convenes the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC);
- provides an Agricultural Liaison Officer to work directly with the community;
- develops agriculture-specific plans and strategies such as the Rural Agricultural Strategy and the Agri-tourism Action Plan;
- promotes ongoing education initiatives such as Simply Local, the annual HAAC Farm Tour, and forest stewardship; and,
- promotes agriculture through the policies of the Regional Official Plan.



Agriculture & the Regional Official Plan

A rural countryside where agriculture is the preferred and predominant activity is a key component of Halton's vision for its future landscape.

To achieve this vision, the Regional Official Plan sets out policies that:

- Designate lands so that agricultural uses and normal farm practices are permitted within approximately 70% of the Region
- Recognize agriculture as the primary activity in the Agricultural Area
- Promote normal farm practices and the right to farm
- Preserve prime agricultural areas and lands, and
- Protect farms from incompatible activities and land uses.

The Natural Heritage System (NHS) & the Regional Official Plan

Halton's vision for its future landscape also includes a Natural Heritage System that preserves and enhances the biological diversity and ecological function of Halton's natural environment.

To achieve this vision, the Regional Official Plan sets out policies that:

- Use a scientific and systems approach to protect and enhance the natural environment, including Key Features such as wildlife and endangered species habitat, wetlands, woodlands, valleylands and watercourses.

The role of agriculture in the RNHS is also considered through policies that:

- Allow agriculture and the RNHS to coexist in balanced harmony
- Support agriculture as a compatible and predominant use outside of Key Features, and
- Allow for Key Features to be protected or enhanced without limiting the ability of existing agricultural uses to continue.

Regional Official Plan

Halton's Regional Official Plan is Halton's guide for land use planning. It helps Regional Council and Regional staff make decisions regarding growth and development.

Agriculture & Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

- To maintain a healthy balance between settlement areas, the rural countryside and the Regional Natural Heritage System (RNHS), when development is proposed within or adjacent to the RNHS, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may be required.
- An EIA is used to help determine whether a development will have negative impacts on the natural features and functions in the portion of the Regional Natural Heritage System affected by the development.
- The EIA requirements for agricultural buildings are different from many other types of development. In many cases, the requirements are reduced.
- An EIA is not required for normal farm practices or for an agricultural use or building that is permitted as-of-right by zoning.
- **If an EIA is required, Halton Region can help by scoping the EIA, providing financial aid, or providing in-kind service.**

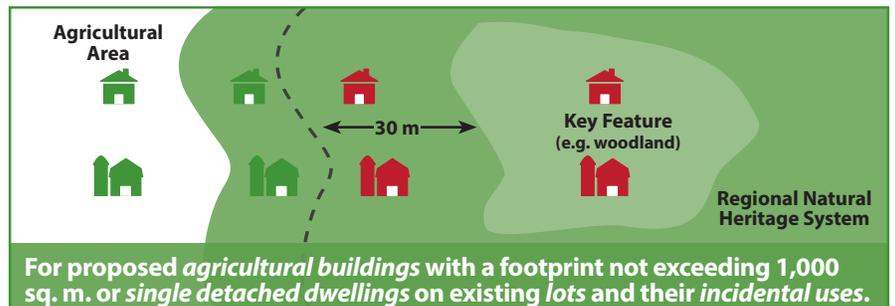
The figures below illustrate the EIA requirements for agricultural buildings that require a *Planning Act* application. For more information, dial 311.

 Proposed Development - EIA Not Required

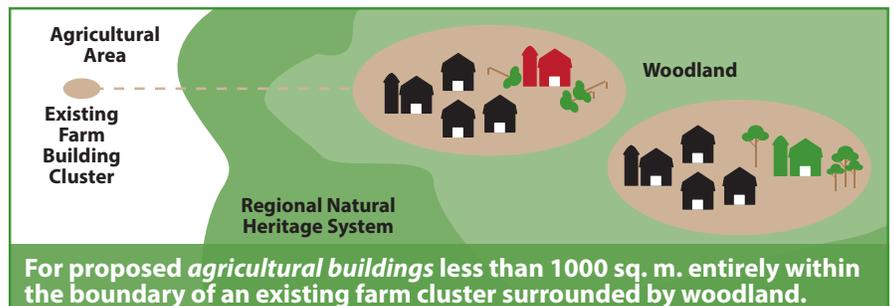
 Proposed Development - EIA Required

 Existing Buildings

An EIA is usually required for buildings located inside or within 120 metres of the RNHS. For agricultural buildings less than 1,000 square metres, the requirement is reduced to inside or within 30 metres of a Key Feature.



If a new agricultural building is proposed within an existing farm building cluster surrounded by woodlands and no tree removal is occurring, no EIA is required.



The requirement for an EIA related to an agricultural building over 1,000 square metres is reduced from within 120 metres of the RNHS to within 30 metres of the RNHS.

